

**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Cedar Ridge Academy  
Route 1, Box 1477  
Roosevelt, Utah 84066**

**July 12, 2005**



**Utah State Office of Education  
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Cedar Ridge Academy**

**Route 1, Box 1477  
Roosevelt, Utah 84066**

**July 12, 2005**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

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## **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, July 12, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Cedar Ridge Academy is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Consulting Principal Wanda Tuttle is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Cedar Ridge Academy, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Cedar Ridge Academy.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction

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*1/3/2005*

**CEDAR RIDGE ACADEMY**  
**ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF**

**School Board**

Rob Nielson ..... Program Director  
Pam Nielson ..... Director of Admissions  
Wes Nielson ..... Director of Operations  
Christine Haggerty ..... School Supervisor

**Administration**

Pam Nielson ..... Counselor  
Wanda (Jodi) Tuttle ..... Principal

**Support Staff**

Annie Jacobs ..... Registrar  
Jessica Purcell ..... Network Administrator

**Faculty**

John Allred ..... History and Reading Skills  
Mike Caudel ..... Art and English  
Omar Gutoff ..... Spanish  
Christine Haggerty ..... English & Karate/P.E.  
Chad Hamblin ..... Science and Study Skills  
James Schreck ..... Social Studies & Family and Consumer Science  
Layne Southam ..... Math  
Colleen Stewart ..... Computer Technology

## **CEDAR RIDGE ACADEMY**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to facilitate optimal learning for all students to enable them to lead fulfilling and productive lives in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex society.

### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

- We believe that there are many aspects of intelligence, and that every student is gifted in a different way. Students will benefit from learning where their strengths and weaknesses lie and how to balance them.
- We believe all students have diverse learning styles that should be accommodated. Students can learn what their learning styles are and how to use them.
- We believe all students should be held accountable for their choices both educationally and behaviorally.
- We believe that if given the tools, each student is capable of academic achievement parallel to their motivation.
- We believe that the staff and teachers are positive role models for our students.
- We believe that the students are capable of becoming effective teachers and role models for other students.
- We believe that learning involves not only managing informational material, but includes managing oneself in time and activity.
- We believe that all students can develop appropriate attitudes to become productive, well-functioning citizens.

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Ralph P. Vander Heide, Ph.D., Accreditation Consultant, Visiting Team  
Chairperson

Judith H. Vander Heide, M.S., Accreditation Consultant



## **VISITING TEAM REPORT**

### **CEDAR RIDGE ACADEMY**

#### **CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE**

Cedar Ridge Academy is a private, co-educational (45% female and 55% male), residential, year-round high school. Located 10 miles north of the rural community of Roosevelt, Utah, in the Uinta Basin, the Academy sits on 30 acres of juniper- and sage-covered rural countryside. The Academy was founded in 1999 with an average enrollment of 19 students. Emphasis is on adolescent academic and personal growth. The Cedar Ridge Academy curriculum originally consisted of Independent Study Distance Education courses offered through Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The Northwest Association and the state of Utah accredited Cedar Ridge Academy as a Candidate Special Purpose School in 2001. Learning packets are still used, but Cedar Ridge Academy now offers, through its own faculty, a full range of Core Curriculum courses and a range of elective courses. Co-curriculum programs include the Shakespeare Festival Trip, Yellowstone Country Trip, and other field trips. Karate regional tournaments, softball, volleyball, and basketball intramural leagues are offered as co-curricular programs as well as being integrated into the Physical Education program.

The teaching staff of eight is 75 percent male and 25 percent female. Racial makeup of the teaching staff is 82 percent Caucasian and 18 percent Hispanic. Average number of years of classroom teaching experience for teachers is 9.4, with an average of 6.1 years in private schools and 5.8 years working with at-risk students. Advanced degrees are held by 40 percent of the school staff.

Total enrollment at Cedar Ridge Academy is currently 64, a 32 percent increase from four years ago. Students come to Cedar Ridge Academy from all parts of the United States—47 percent are from the eastern states, and three percent are from Canada. Most are from largely urban-suburban communities of varying sizes.

All students attending Cedar Ridge Academy have been determined to be behaviorally and/or academically at-risk adolescents before coming to the school. The student body enters with issues including low self-esteem, poor self-concept, poor peer relations, poor interpersonal skills, and ineffective parenting. Often multiple issues are involved. The average stay for a student at Cedar Ridge Academy is 18 months, with most students returning home to complete their secondary education elsewhere.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The school included information on student achievement, demographics, and perceptions of quality, as well as a description of Cedar Ridge. These broad areas are broken down into extensive subsections, which include data on student assessment, performance (including national and state measures of expectations), and areas of strength and limitations. Perceptions of the quality of the total school program were gathered from students, parents, and the school community.

The profile reveals that over the past six years Cedar Ridge Academy has shown steady growth in student enrollment, staff, and facilities. The Visiting Team members have visited the school on two previous occasions, and were most impressed at the improvement of the physical facilities, which include a regulation-size gymnasium with six classrooms and offices, as well as a new residence building and cafeteria. The Visiting Team notes that further improvements and expansion are being carried out and/or planned.

Teachers and administrators were interested to learn that, in two areas of the surveys, student perceptions were well below those of the parents and community. These two areas are (1) understanding of moral and ethical responsibilities and (2) understanding and getting along with other people. The second was especially surprising because students gave a high rating to peer and student-teacher relationships. The school will be pursuing these two areas further in order to better understand the discrepancy.

*b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The Visiting Team recommends that the school list all the extracurricular activities that take place. (Put your best foot forward!) In the profile section of the self-study, reference is made to curricular expansions and improvements, but specifics are not given. Also, reference is made to “consolidating progress and growth.” The Visiting Team heard about this during the visit but, again, specifics were not given in the written report.

### **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

The Visiting Team commends the profile information that is given, but nevertheless recommends that more information on teachers be listed in future self-studies—such as number of years employed in teaching, degrees, universities attended, number of years at the school, etc. Also, it is recommended that follow-up information be given concerning students who have left the program (to the extent possible). Some of the extensive information given on the school’s website could also be included.

The Visiting Team observes that a systematic process of collecting and managing profile data is in place, and that the school quite clearly has described its strengths and limitations and areas for growth based on the data collected.

The sets of profile data provide a description of the “big picture” about performance at Cedar Ridge, but the school is reminded to make certain that all aspects of the program are covered and that the results of the profiling are communicated to all stakeholders of the school.

Then, too, the school is reminded that analysis of the profile data should be used to guide the school improvement planning process.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS**

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The faculty, administration, and other staff members at Cedar Ridge Academy believe parents are an integral part of the program and an essential element of the therapeutic/educational process. Therapists, residential counselors, classroom aides, and psychologists as well as school personnel, are involved in improving youngsters behaviorally and educationally.

The “school community” is very much involved, and through projects in the town of Roosevelt and Duchesne County the local community is involved with the school. The community has not been involved with the self-study, however.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The school’s self-study reflects the current strengths and weaknesses in a objective manner, as explained in Chapter 1 above.

## **CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

Cedar Ridge Academy’s desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

- Effective Communication Skills for Life and Relationships
- Proactive Learner
- Life Skills
- Employability

Each of the DRSLs has been described in succinct paragraphs, and detailed indicators of student achievement are outlined for each.

The Visiting Team commends the school for the work that has been done on DRSLs, but offers the following observations: (1) One teacher mentioned that she was unhappy with one of the DRSLs, stating that she was going to change it or revise it. The Visiting Team reminds the school that, although the creation of DRSLs is an ongoing process, any changes should be determined and agreed to by all affected constituents. (2) It seems that four major DRSLs is a great deal of work. Perhaps this small school should consider concentrating on fewer. This is, of course, also a decision the school must make collaboratively.

### **Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:**

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The entire group of faculty and administrators developed the mission statement and beliefs. They began with a review of the standards of the behavioral and therapeutic component of Cedar Ridge Residential Treatment Center. They determined which aspects of those standards were relevant to the educational component, and then composed the educational mission and beliefs.

The mission statement is clear, concise, and precise. It reflects learning as the top priority of the educational component of Cedar Ridge and describes a compelling direction for the school.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

This has been well accomplished (see the list of beliefs at the beginning of this report). The school beliefs address the key issues pertinent to effective decision making and policy development. It appears that the implications of the school's belief statements and the level of the school's commitment to acting upon the beliefs have been considered prior to finalizing the list of beliefs.

The Visiting Team does suggest that the school revisit the beliefs to determine whether some could be combined. Some redundancy was observed.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The DRSLs align as recommended by NSSE. The Visiting Team observed that the analysis of student learning needs takes into account the profile data and

related assessment and evaluation measures for student learning. The expectations for student learning reflect meaningful and appropriately challenging goals. They are free of jargon, and all stakeholders should be able to understand the clear and concise language.

### **Curriculum Development:**

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The curriculum is based on the Utah Core Curriculum, and teachers work together to meet and modify the core as needed for the school's unique population. The Utah Life Skills are a part of the curriculum. Standards for appropriate learning for the students' varying abilities guide the development of curricula. Students work to a great extent from packets, and proceed at their own pace under the guidance of teachers who provide both classroom and extra help.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

The teaching process supports the DRSLs and requirement of the home states of the students. All faculty members concur in focusing on the school-wide DRSLs as part of their teaching assignment.

### **Quality Instructional Design:**

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

Teachers have learned that they must be creative and innovative with this student population, and that they must help with the rehabilitation of students as well as their academic needs. Teachers are very much aware that instructional time must be protected and appropriately allocated to support learning. The Visiting Team encourages the teaching staff to continue and improve this endeavor.

The Visiting Team learned that the therapists and the faculty have a commendable working relationship. However, the Visiting Team also learned that there is a degree of conflict regarding what teachers termed "residency vs. program." Apparently this problem is in the process of being solved. The two areas are working diligently toward improvement.

- b) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

The students engage in several appropriate “additional opportunities,” such as sports and community service, as well as activities that directly support the curriculum. The school provides opportunities for students to improve and enrich their learning through expanded use of time, facilities, and instructional resources.

### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

The development of assessments of student learning is based on a clear definition of the type of achievement to be assessed and the performance standards for evaluating the quality of students’ achievement. Assessment is both formative and summative. It appeared to the Visiting Team that assessments are fair and equitable. It also appeared that teachers attempt to individualize assessment.

### **Leadership for School Improvement:**

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The “consulting principal” is a competent educational leader who understands the importance of promoting and fostering quality instruction. Although she does not visit the school daily, she makes regularly scheduled appearances and is frequently in touch with the school by telephone.

The principal encourages decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and individualized. She, along with other administrators, provides skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. She monitors the work of teachers and checks on the progress of students.

The school leadership promotes quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning.

The Visiting Team notes that the “consulting principal” now plans to live in another state most of the year while maintaining a residence in Utah. This, of course, presents a problem in visiting the school frequently enough to carry out adequate supervision. Cedar Ridge Academy needs to advise the state

accreditation specialist and accreditation committee how this problem will be resolved.

### **Community Building:**

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

As noted throughout this report, community building is part of the ethos of Cedar Ridge Academy. Positive and productive working relationships are established among students, teachers, support staff, and administrators.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The school participates in community projects and service learning, which is an integral part of the program.

### **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Teachers were appreciative and complimentary concerning in-service, which is adequate and carried out according to need. Administrators are perceived to be most supportive.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The school is committed to progressive change. Of course, a principle concern is to help these youngsters with their personal problems in order that they may better achieve academically.

## **CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI**

### **Standard I – Educational Program**

Cedar Ridge Academy meets all four sections of this standard. The educational program is aligned with the mission statement and beliefs. The Visiting Team observed that the vision for the school has been collaboratively developed. The instructional and organizational practices, as well as the policies and procedures, support the desired results for student learning and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society. The program of studies meets the requirements of the state.

### **Standard II – Student Personnel Services**

All three sections of this standard are met. Personnel services are designed to give appropriate systematic assistance to students as called for in the subsections of the requirements. The assigned personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for each 400 students enrolled. The primary objective of the counseling program is to promote and enhance the academic and personal development (behavioral therapy) of students and to prepare them for post-high school experiences.

### **Standard III – School Plant and Equipment**

This standard is superbly met. The new facilities, combined with the original school plant, provide for a variety of instructional activities and programs and incorporate aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere. This provides for the health and safety of students and all school faculty and personnel.

### **Standard IV – Library Media Program**

Cedar Ridge Academy meets the five sections of this standard. The school library media program is a resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support. It contributes to the achievement of the DRSLs. A certified “consulting librarian” provides assistance in promoting independent use of ideas and information. Sufficient funds are provided each year to meet the library/media needs of students and teachers.

### **Standard V – Records**

This standard is met. Student records are maintained, handled, and protected in the best interests of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to



access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

**Standard VI – School Improvement** (This is addressed in the self-study.)

The five sections of this standard are met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school. Systematic analysis of data regarding the performance of students has been incorporated into the comprehensive school improvement process, as has ongoing examination of instructional practices. The plan is updated and adjusted each year in alignment with perceived needs.

**Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel**

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the state of Utah and are endorsed or properly (temporarily) exempted for the subjects they are teaching. The school is reminded to keep close watch on meeting this standard.

**Standard VIII – Administration**

This standard is met; however, see the caveat concerning the “consulting principal” under “Leadership,” in Chapter 3. The administration of Cedar Ridge Academy provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary and required administrative procedures.

**Standard IX – Teacher Load**

This standard is met. The total number of students instructed by any one teacher in any one grading period is well below numbers set by the Utah State Office of Education and/or NAAS.

**Standard X – Activities**

This standard is met. Cedar Ridge supports a range of activities that supplement and augment the basic instructional program by providing additional enriching experiences for students consistent with the school’s mission and beliefs. Attention is paid to providing equal opportunities.

**Standard XI – Business Practices**

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds. The school’s advertising and promotional literature appear to be completely truthful and ethical.

## CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The plan appears to be adequate and understood by all stakeholders. There is school-wide commitment to the action plan, and follow-up procedures are sound. The Visiting Team assumes that the plan will achieve the desired outcomes. School personnel intend to change and modify it as needed. Future action plans, however, should indicate the person(s) responsible for overseeing different sections of the plan (who does what, when, and why, materials and funds needed, etc.). Also, the way in which the action plan directly aligns with the DRSLs should be better clarified. The NSSE handbook should be consulted as a model for formatting and for an excellent explanation of “alignment.”

Perhaps the school could write two action plans, one directly treating the DRSLs and another that deals with other pertinent issues. The recommended format is to have complete alignment (profiling—establishing beliefs—mission statement derived from beliefs—analysis of how the school is operating—establishment of DRSLs based on profiling, mission and beliefs—an action plan that addresses the DRSLs).

## CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends the owners and administration for building the lovely new facilities.
- The Visiting Team commends all personnel and students for their hospitality and cooperation with the Visiting Team.
- The Visiting Team commends all personnel for their honesty concerning the academic programs at Cedar Ridge Academy and for their willingness to improve.
- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for their enthusiasm and apparent devotion to improving the lives of the students (i.e., for their commitment to the mission statement and beliefs).

- The Visiting Team commends the administration, therapists, and faculty for holding regular meetings to discuss all aspects of the ongoing program of the school.
- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for fostering a nurturing but goal-directed atmosphere, and for providing opportunities in service learning.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration for supporting quality in-service for teachers.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school profile in future self-studies offer even more information and data including follow-up studies on students who have completed their stay at Cedar Ridge Academy. The Visiting Team also recommends that school personnel in future self-studies better align the action plan directly with the school's DRSLs using language and descriptions that make this alignment clear.
- The Visiting Team recommends that all personnel continue to work as a team on all aspects of the program.
- The Visiting Team recommends that owners and administrators continue the great effort to involve parents in school improvement. (The Visiting Team recognizes that this is difficult.)
- The Visiting Team recommends that the administration, with input from faculty, consider offering students (especially those who may be college-bound) better opportunities for preparing for standardized tests.
- The Visiting Team recommends that career, vocational, and college information be made available to all students.
- The Visiting Team recommends that teachers engage in more direct teaching to the extent that this is possible. However, the Visiting Team commends the efforts of the faculty to create individually tailored programs for each students, and recognizes that some packet learning is needed to achieve that objective.

Lastly, the school is reminded that accreditation provides reasonable assurance about the quality of opportunities available to students who attend the school. A primary purpose of accreditation is to protect the public trust. Accreditation promotes voluntary self-regulation, and is a means of showing confidence in a school's performance (i.e., that both quantitative and qualitative standards have been established). An ultimate objective of the self-study and accreditation process should be to have schools institutionalize the process of reflective inquiry and thereby become internally responsible for the

maintenance of standards—even the creation of standards. The Visiting Team anticipates that Cedar Ridge Academy will continue the process of self-evaluation and ongoing improvement.